

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 4 and 18 stand canceled.

Claims 1, 12, 19, 20, 22 have been amended responsive to the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112. The Amendment leaves claims 1-3, 5-17, 19-22 pending.

As correctly noted by the Examiner, alignment of the protuberance 110 and the slot 84 enables axial insertion of the former through the latter, as is commonly known with bayonet-type connections, and then partial revolution about axis 40 provides misalignment of the protuberance and slot, thus providing axial retention. Further as the Examiner correctly notes, continued revolution would re-align the protuberance and slot, which in turn would permit axial withdrawal.

As noted in the specification, page 10, lines 5-13, the components in Fig. 3 are assembled together as a subassembly, with the protuberances 110 passing through the slots 84 in a vertical direction to allow the components to be aligned and assembled prior to insertion into the gearcase.

Then, by rotating the bearing carrier 24 slightly about the axis of rotation 40, the protuberances 110 and slots 84 can be misaligned so as to prevent axial movement of the bevel gear 10 relative to the bearing adapter 20 and bearing carrier 24. This locks the component shown in Figure 3 into a single subassembly which allows that subassembly to be easily lowered into a gearcase as an integral unit and assembled with the other components in the gearcase.

As noted at page 11, lines 1-9:

As a result, the assembly shown in Figure 5 is attached together as a subassembly that can be more easily lowered into the gearcase for purposes of assembling the bevel gear 10, which is a forward gear, with the bevel gear which is attached to the driveshaft as described above. The individual components of the subassembly shown in Figure 3 cannot move relative to each other axially in a direction parallel to the axis of rotation 40. As a result, they cannot separate from each other and can therefore be assembled as a subassembly rather than as individual components in the manner generally known to those skilled in the art.

After the noted subassembly is assembled in the gearcase, as is known, there is no longer any need to provide the noted axial retention because the assembly provides same. After the noted assembly, rotation of the gear member (10) and the retaining member (100) is enabled by the bearing assembly (e.g. roller bearing 30). The continued revolution noted by the Examiner is desirable and necessary and is intentionally enabled by the bearing (30). Reconsideration and removal of the 35 U.S.C. §112 rejection set forth on page 3, clause 3, is respectfully requested.

On page 4 of the Office Action, clause 5, the Examiner notes that "a bearing assembly" is indefinite because it does not set forth any structure which facilitates permitting the rotation of the retaining member. In response, applicant has deleted "assembly" and simply calls for a bearing. Furthermore, applicant has included the limitation that the bearing permit "rotation of said gear member and of said retaining member" in combination with the already recited requirement that the retaining member (100) be attached to the gear member (10). Each of the independent claims 1, 12, 19 now includes the noted clarificational language, and the claim language is now believed responsive to the Examiner's comments. Dependent claims 20, 22 have been amended to correspond to proper antecedent basis.

Appl. No. 10/721,840
Amendment dated November 28, 2006
Reply to Advisory Action of October 26, 2006

It is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance with claims 1-3, 5-17, 19-22, and such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

ANDRUS, SCEALES, STARKE & SAWALL, LLP

Michael E. Taken

Michael E. Taken
(Reg. No. 28,120)

100 East Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 1100
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202
(414) 271-7590